

**TASK-BASED LEARNING AND CURRICULUM
INNOVATION IN A THAI EFL CONTEXT**

by

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**Submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation does not contain material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of any university; nor does it contain material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is made in the text of the dissertation.

Signed *Meechai Iemjinda*

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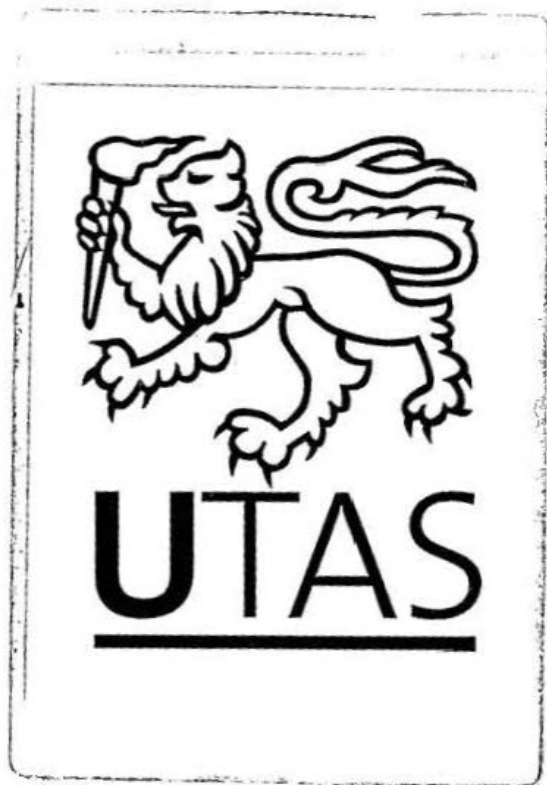
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ABSTRACT

'Professional development is one of the most promising and powerful routes to growth on the job, to combating boredom and alienation, to school improvement and to satisfaction' (Fullan, 1982: 274).

The aim of this study was to develop, implement and evaluate a professional development programme for teachers of English as a Foreign Language in Thailand to assist them to make a major change in their pedagogy, a change mandated by the National Education Act of 1999. More specifically, what was required of them was to change from being a teacher who delivers instruction in the classroom to a teacher who acts as a facilitator in a learner-centred classroom.

The professional development programme (PDP) drew for its design on programmes recommended for their success in other contexts, but was unique for its innovative combination of specific forms of content ('task-based learning') and process (a 'coaching approach'), and for its adaptation to the needs of EFL primary school teachers in Thailand. Task-based learning (TBL) was recommended in the literature for its success in helping teachers to focus on student learning, and providing explicit practices to implement the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT) as required by the new curriculum. A coaching approach was claimed to assist teachers by clearly explaining theoretical concepts and their practical implementation at the classroom level, simplifying the steps for implementation in the classroom context and supporting teachers through the process of change.

The study was conducted in a non-metropolitan region in Thailand, and involved nine primary EFL teachers and their classes in three cities. Data were gathered by quantitative (questionnaire, classroom observation checklist) and qualitative (interview) methods before and after the PDP to record changes in the teachers' perceptions and classroom practices over eight months. The data showed that all the teachers were rated higher by their supervisors on the six major criteria chosen to characterise CLT, and the teachers and their students provided corroborating evidence of a major shift in pedagogy towards the model preferred by the Thai Ministry of Education.

The study showed that a professional development programme of this kind, closely adapted to a specific context, involving preparatory workshop training followed by a semester of guided, strongly supported classroom implementation practice, can make a significant change in Thai primary EFL teachers' understanding and use of CLT as an innovative pedagogy. It indicates that this model of professional development is capable of providing a means by which the desired change to a learner-centred, communicative English language curriculum might be achieved system-wide in Thailand, one that has up to this point proved very difficult to implement.

This study represents a contribution to several fields, including curriculum change, teaching English as a Foreign Language, and professional development. It makes a major contribution to the area of foreign language teaching and learning, particularly professional development in the teaching of English as a foreign language in a country such as Thailand.

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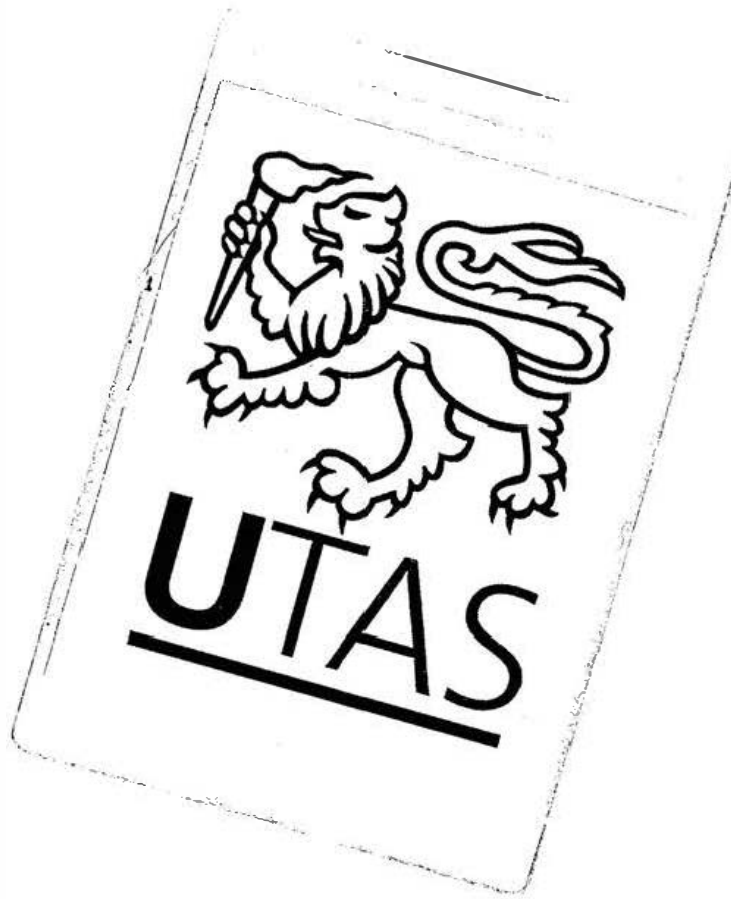
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